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SUBJECT: ROMANIAN RESPONSE ON U.S. PRIORITIES FOR IWC MEETING

REF: STATE 057319

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¶1. (SBU) Econoff delivered reftel points in writing and followed up by phone with Mihai MANOIU, the Biodiversity Division Director at the Ministry of Environment, on June 13, 2008. Manoiu admitted that the Government of Romania (GOR) has not given too much attention to whaling, having just joined the International Whaling Commission (IWC) this April. He said Romania's main IWC priority is identifying how it will pay the IWC fee by the June 23 start of the IWC annual meeting. Manoiu pledged that the GOR will begin to formulate its official position in the coming days, and is open in general to U.S. priorities. He said Romania will likely follow the lead of others in the EU. Regarding representation at the IWC Meeting in Chile, Manoiu said that while the GOR had intended for a senior maritime researcher to attend, he will not be available. In his stead, a representative from the Romanian Embassy in Chile will attend.

¶2. (SBU) Comment: It was clear that, as a very new member of the IWC, Romania has not devoted much attention or resources to whaling issues. Sending a local embassy representative to the Santiago IWC Meeting may likely be a cost-saving move. As with other topics where the GOR does not perceive a direct national interest, whaling is an issue about which Romania will be receptive to U.S. positions but will ultimately follow the lead of larger EU member states. End comment.

TAUBMAN